

#1

COMPLETE

Collector: Web Link 1 (Web Link)
Started: Wednesday, August 28, 2024 4:15:30 PM
Last Modified: Wednesday, August 28, 2024 4:28:29 PM
Time Spent: 00:12:58
IP Address: 206.127.117.21

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Q1

Contact information:

Name: Charles Denowh
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State/Province: MT
Email Address: cd@montanagroup.net

Q2

Please comment on Prairie Habitat Conservation Leases

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on behalf of United Property Owners of Montana.

We support the Commission's recent move away from perpetual easements to term easements. A perpetual easement is an incredibly unfair arrangement for landowners. In such an agreement, the public receives the benefit of the conservation easement year after year after year, into perpetuity. For the public, the value of the easement is effectively infinite. In return for this infinite value, a landowner is offered a paltry, one-time payment.

Perpetual easements are predatory. They tend to take advantage of distressed landowners willing to give up a lot in exchange for a short-term infusion of money.

Term easements are a more equitable arrangement. However, a term of 40 years for a one-time payment is far too long. Much better would be annual payments, indexed to inflation.

Landowners are asked to enter into a long-term conservation easement with very little information about what the effects of inflation will have on their side of the bargain.

We urge you to adjust this proposal to include annual payments over the course of the forty-year term, and to not force the landowner into a situation where the effects of inflation could seriously erode the value they receive for giving up their property.

#2

COMPLETE

Collector: Web Link 1 (Web Link)
Started: Wednesday, August 28, 2024 6:52:12 PM
Last Modified: Wednesday, August 28, 2024 6:55:45 PM
Time Spent: 00:03:33
IP Address: 72.255.168.60

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Q1

Contact information:

Name:	Christopher Hyle
City/Town:	Butte
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Email Address:	chrishyle55@gmail.com

Q2

Please comment on Prairie Habitat Conservation Leases

I fully support the prairie conservation leases. I would also want to see the previously proposed agenda item to have upland bird season for non-residents start on Sept.15 be reconsidered.

#3

COMPLETE

Collector: Web Link 1 (Web Link)
Started: Thursday, August 29, 2024 5:45:02 AM
Last Modified: Thursday, August 29, 2024 5:46:56 AM
Time Spent: 00:01:53
IP Address: 144.86.209.102

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Q1

Contact information:

Name: Allan Gadoury
City/Town: Bozeman
State/Province: MT
Email Address: al@6xoutfitters.com

Q2

Please comment on Prairie Habitat Conservation Leases

I support Prairie Habitat Conservation Leases.

#4

COMPLETE

Collector: Web Link 1 (Web Link)
Started: Wednesday, September 04, 2024 7:36:15 AM
Last Modified: Wednesday, September 04, 2024 7:42:01 AM
Time Spent: 00:05:45
IP Address: 66.223.252.156

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Q1

Contact information:

Name: **Richard French**
City/Town: **Whitehall**
State/Province: **MT**
Email Address: **sheephunterak@yahoo.com**

Q2

Please comment on Prairie Habitat Conservation Leases

I fully support wolf trapping season dates of first Monday after Thanksgiving to March 15 for the entire state., with no deviation in the season due to a grizzly bear potentially being caught as a non-target species.

#5

COMPLETE

Collector: Web Link 1 (Web Link)
Started: Thursday, September 19, 2024 11:59:03 AM
Last Modified: Thursday, September 19, 2024 12:05:02 PM
Time Spent: 00:05:58
IP Address: 35.150.74.178

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Q1

Contact information:

Name: Garrett Titus
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State/Province: MT
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Q2

Please comment on Prairie Habitat Conservation Leases

Prairie Habitat Conservation Leases

Dear Commissioners,

On behalf of the Montana Wildlife Federation (MWF), Montana's oldest and largest hunter and angler-based conservation group, founded in 1936 by conservationists, landowners, hunters, and anglers, we submit these comments on several proposed temporary habitat conservation leases. MWF is a 501(c) 3 nonprofit organization with more than 5000 members and 14 affiliate clubs throughout the state, all united in our mission to protect and enhance Montana's public wildlife, lands, waters, and fair chase hunting and fishing heritage.

First, we express our support for the QT Ranch and 52 Ranch Habitat Temporary Conservation Leases. These leases facilitate public access to approximately 18,255 acres of the 52 Ranch and 640 acres in the QT Ranch in Eastern Montana. Both leases open previously inaccessible lands to the public and align with the administration's broader goal of enrolling 500,000 private land acres into conservation lease agreements.

We commend the 52 Ranch landowners for providing additional access beyond what the temporary lease requires and encourage both ranches to explore participation in Block Management (BMA) to further secure public access on a larger and more sustainable scale. Enhanced public access to the QT Ranch in the future, in line with the lease's cost, is a priority.

The funding for these leases comes primarily from state hunting license fees and federal Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration funds, contributed by hunters. While we generally support temporary leases over having no conservation easements at all, we are concerned about the long-term impacts of dedicating large portions of available funds to temporary leases. There is a risk that we will lack the funds to pursue permanent conservation easements when willing sellers express interest. This would result in higher costs for lesser conservation outcomes.

The two leases for the QT and 52 Ranches amount to \$2,226,906.50 for 40 years of conservation management across 18,895 acres, which equates to \$117.86 per acre. If these figures were made more transparent to the public, we believe FWP would receive more feedback. Additionally, providing details on specific threats to these parcels would help us and the public better evaluate the proposed leases.

Similarly, we appreciate the opportunity to comment on the Williams Family Trust Temporary Habitat Conservation Lease. However, MWF opposes the advancement of this lease. Our members value fiscally responsible conservation efforts, and this proposal does not meet that standard. The Williams Family Trust property is enrolled in the Block Management Program and is a high earner. Allocating \$339,770 for the same access and land conservation for 40 years is not a prudent use of resources, especially given that this property lies outside the core habitat for the Sage-Grouse. The benefits of this lease are minimal at best, and the public does not gain sufficient value from this investment unless there is a significant risk that the land will be developed or removed from the BMA program if the lease is not approved.

We urge the department to enhance transparency across all temporary lease proposals. To facilitate clearer public understanding and feedback, we are asking the department to include a comprehensive property evaluation, annualized cost per acre, total price, detailed public access information, and an assessment of specific threats to each parcel. This level of transparency will foster better public engagement and a more informed dialogue.

In closing, while we support the advancement of the 52 Ranch and QT Ranch leases, we cannot support the Williams Family Trust lease due to the concerns outlined. We appreciate the department's ongoing efforts and the landowners' commitment to conservation, though we are asking for a more balanced and transparent approach moving forward.

Sincerely,
Montana Wildlife Federation